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6 Emotions in movements

Donatella della Porta and Marco Giugni

6.1 Introduction

As most of the activists of the Lemanic Social Forum are used to working together and in many points also share a solid friendship, the structure of debates is very homogeneous . . . The routine established by habits makes the functioning of the group very informal.

This quote from the field notes on the Swiss case points to an important aspect that we would like to discuss in this chapter. Although arguments are important in meetings, the forms and outcomes of debates are also influenced by another dimension: the emotional culture of groups and meetings. Normative reflections on the discursive quality of democracy have stressed rationality – at least until the feminist critique of Jürgen Habermas (e.g. I. M. Young 2000) brought emotions back in. Similarly, in social movement research, a ‘cultural turn’ recently ended the long ‘silence’ on the subject of emotions – although these studies initially focused on cognition (Goodwin, Jasper and Polletta 2001a).

There is therefore a recognition that social movement politics is passionate politics (*ibid.*). Emotions are intense during protests, which often not only imply non-conventional activities, but are also motivated by ethical concerns. But meetings also might be emotionally charged, in positive or negative ways, and emotions clearly influence the quality of communication. The initial progress notwithstanding, research on the emotional dimension of social movement politics is still rare. There are various reasons for this, both normative and empirical.

First of all, emotions have long been viewed with suspicion, not only in social movement studies, but also in political sociology and political science at large. In the 1970s in particular, social movement scholars reacted to a previous tendency to consider non-conventional forms of

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protest as irrational, and therefore pathological: as a sign of structural strain (Smelser 1962; Gurr 1970), disturbed individual personality or situational loss of control. As for the latter, the image of individuals as losing all self-restraint (e.g. Le Bon 1982) has long guided police crowd control behaviours in the direction of repressive protest policing (della Porta and Reiter 1998). The vision of social movements as producers of positive emotions and social change proposed by the Chicago School faded away with the prevailing instrumental vision of movements, along with the dominant, mainly cognitive view of collective identities. Only recently has the emotional dimension of participation in protest events begun to re-emerge (Aminzade and McAdam 2001; Goodwin, Jasper and Polletta 2001a). Beyond theoretical concerns, there are also empirical difficulties inherent in investigating an impalpable dimension such as emotions, especially when researchers are sociologists or political scientists, rather than psychologists.

In this chapter, we shall try to address both theoretical and empirical concerns in studying the general atmosphere of our groups' meetings, looking at internal differences as well as their apparent causes and effects. We shall focus in particular on what we define as *group emotional culture* and *situational emotional culture*. Our discussion will be based mainly on qualitative materials derived from the participant observation we conducted. However, we shall also make use of some quantitative evidence, especially related to controversies that emerged during our participant observation. In this way, we plan to address questions of how the emotional culture in groups and situations interacts (in terms of influenced and influences) with characteristics of the involved groups (such as organizational models, but also friendship ties and social homogeneity/heterogeneity), as well as with specific controversies¹ (expression of conflicts, structure of communication, and decision-making practices).

The emotional charge involved in group discussions is operationalized through a raw but helpful indicator of the general atmosphere and the degree of negative emotional tension observed during controversies, which distinguishes among three situations: relaxed, mixed and tense.²

¹ As mentioned, a controversy is a discourse situation in which two or more participants (or groups of participants) in a discussion disagree, no matter what the subject of the disagreement is (see Chapter 1). This may bear on internal organization or structure, external delegation or group action, strategic decisions or other issues such as meta-discourse, values and so on. Of course, not all internal communication leads to controversy. In our observation, of the 510 agenda items discussed, we found 143 controversies.

² This variable relies largely on observers' impressions of what most people in the group felt during controversies. For example, a tense situation is characterized by audience groaning or making comments or of course speakers explicitly addressing the uncomfortable atmosphere.

We will therefore look at how the atmosphere in controversies varies across groups and countries, as well as at the relationship between the emotional charge present in controversies and certain characteristics of those controversies, such as type of power, mode of decision-making, and outcome.³ We shall conclude with some reflections on the general emotional characteristics of the global justice movement and relate it to the *contextual emotional culture*.

6.2 Emotions and social movements

Social movements are certainly rich in emotions. Scholars of social movements have compiled lists of emotions relevant for research, in recognition that 'Social movements are awash in emotions. Anger, fear, envy, guilt, pity, shame, awe, passion, and other feelings play a part either in the formation of social movements, in their relations with their targets ... and in the life of potential recruits and members' (Kemper 2001: 58).

In bringing emotions back in, recent thinking in social movement studies has innovated by moving in new directions the old approach had not considered. In particular, our own approach to emotions in this research shares four main innovations in recent thinking and theorization on this issue.

First, while the breakdown approach to social movements tended to consider emotions as negative and social movement activists as carriers of those negative emotions (e.g. frustration, aggression, etc.), recent research has pointed out the relevance of additional emotions – negative ones, but also positive ones (such as joy, pride, pleasure and love) – for understanding social movement dynamics.⁴ Although the definition of emotion is still contested, some useful typologies have been produced, distinguishing emotions that address a specific object from more generic ones, or short-term from long-term emotions (Goodwin, Jasper and Polletta 2001a).⁵ Emotional liberation has been considered as important

³ We should stress that the low number of cases (controversies) necessitates much caution in interpreting the results and limits us to a very tentative and exploratory analysis.

⁴ Content analysis on oral history of the civil rights movements in the United States and East Germany noted 414 statements referring to emotions such as fear (36.9%), anger (10%), happiness, sadness, outrage, surprise, agitation, fearlessness, excitement, togetherness, pride, anxiety (Goodwin and Pfaff 2001: 286). In the Solidarity movement in Poland, emotions such as 'fear, courage, anger, laughter, nervous breakdown, pride and solidarity' were observed, especially in the very intense seventeen days of protest in Gdansk (Barker 2001).

⁵ In the analysis of the movement against child sexual abuse, emotions of trauma (grief, shame, helpless anger) have been distinguished from emotions of resistance (pride, happiness, love, safety, confidence, righteous anger) (Whittier 2001: 239).

as its cognitive counterpart in explaining the development of protest, especially in risky forms of activism (Flam 2005). Reciprocal emotions – positive ones such as love and loyalty), but also more negative ones like jealousy, rivalry, and resentment – have especially important effects on movement dynamics.

Second, recent research has refuted dichotomous oppositions of emotions versus interest and/or cognition, instead locating emotional processes within cognitive and instrumental processes (Goodwin, Jasper and Polletta 2001a). In particular, just as interests cannot be opposed to identities – since identification with a broader community is necessary in order to define one's own interest (Pizzorno 1978) – so thoughts cannot be opposed to feelings, as 'participants in rituals communicate whole complexes of ideas and embodied feelings' (Barker 2001: 188). Emotions do contribute to the ways in which people make sense of the world; as research on small groups has stressed, emotions can change beliefs (Kelly and Barsade 2001: 105). Feeling is a part of thought, and moral shock alters ways of thinking (Gould 2004). Thus, emotions interact with cognition in determining an individual's behaviour.

Third, emotions have been rooted in context. While biology has located emotions in the evolution of species, and psychology in personality, a sociological analysis aims at embedding emotions in contexts, where social rules define the proper emotions to feel and the proper way to express them (Goodwin, Jasper and Polletta 2001). In fact, the group's emotional history influences how members feel about the group (*ibid.*: 117). Emotions are produced in social interactions and embedded in social relationships, with a changing distribution of power and status (Kemper 2001). Interactive settings change emotions: crowds do not extinguish self-constraint, but do affect the emotional context (Barker 2001). Research on small groups has noted that affective expression or even feelings are augmented or constrained 'by norms concerning the appropriateness of emotional expression that develop within the group itself' (Kelly and Barsade 2001: 104). In social movement research, however, emotional self-reflexivity seems limited to specific group culture (King 2005).

Fourth, emotions are seen as subject to collective agency. In emotional labour, 'movement groups interactively construct feelings that are genuinely felt (deep acting) and they strategize about and collectively decide what emotions to display or acknowledge in order to promote particular responses in observers (surface acting)' (Whittier 2001: 237). Social movements as well as movement events tend to transform emotions (e.g. shame into solidarity) or to intensify them (Collins 2001: 29). Successful rituals produce collective effervescence and group solidarity, strengthening the

emotional energy. Certain protest rituals and language help to transform shame into pride in the gay and lesbian communities (Gould 2001), but also shame into self-realization in Christian Right anti-gay activism (Stein 2001). In particular, social movements transform emotions by transforming the everyday relations to which previous emotions were attached (Calhoun 2001: 55). In the Ireland Land Movement, rituals (including music, narratives of oppression, etc.) in emotionally highly charged meetings created solidarity, and therefore identity, among disparate communities (Kane 2001).

This growing body of research and thinking has the merit of re-establishing emotions as a legitimate topic of study. However, much remains to be done in terms of the conceptualization of emotions as well as observation of which emotions become relevant in which contexts. In their conclusion to a path-breaking collection of research on emotions, Francesca Polletta and Edwin Amenta (2001: 306) invited scholars to strengthen research on emotions 'by better specifying the conditions in which particular emotional dynamics are more likely to occur'. We hope with our contributions to make some modest steps in this direction. In fact, in our research, both qualitative and quantitative methods have been used within a logic of discovery – given that, on the one hand, the level of accumulated knowledge is still low and, on the other, the number of our empirical observations is too small to draw inferences on causal relations. Rather, we would like to develop some hypotheses from our specific case, leaving to further research the task of testing their potential for generalization.

In particular, our observation will address emotional cultures, at different levels. Paying attention to the normative context, we assume that the emotions that are felt and expressed in social movements are linked to the general external context (which we call contextual emotional culture) and the specific group culture (group emotional culture), as well as the more specific situation (situational emotional culture).

In terms of the *contextual emotional culture*, which we define as the set of contextual norms on emotions, it has been observed that Western, modern culture tends to stigmatize emotion, preferring interests over passions; this has also an effect on social movements, which often prefer to build a self-image as reasonable and rational actors (Dobbin 2001). However, new social movements have been said to reflect some emerging (post-modern?) recognition of the role of emotions, or at least a cyclical re-appreciation of passions over interest (Hirschman 1982).

In this contribution, we will not investigate this level empirically, but will make reference to it, in a speculative way, in our Conclusions. We shall instead use empirical evidence to develop hypotheses on the other two levels. In terms of *group emotional culture*, referring to norms on

emotion in specific groups, we assume that, even within the same movement, specific groups nurture specific emotional paradigms (or *habitus*), differing in the ways in which they address emotions. We shall observe (section 6.3) that our groups differ in terms of their group emotional culture. As with social movement organizations in general, the groups we have studied differ greatly in the emotional charge they present in their internal, day-to-day functioning and communication.

Activists also tend to recognize the different emotional cultures in the different environments in which they participate, engaging in a (not necessarily conscious) emotional labour oriented towards controlling some emotions and stimulating others (Whittier 2001). Looking at *situational emotional culture*, defined as the specific sets of norms on emotions that apply to specific situations, we might assume that emotions are most important (for their positive but also negative effects) in small face-to-face groups (see section 6.4). Focusing on specific situational emotional culture – that of small-group meetings – we will look at how emotional situations (tense vs relaxed) interact with the ways in which discussions in meetings (and controversies) unfold and end.

In the conclusion (section 6.5), reflecting on our empirical results in general, we suggest some hypotheses about the ways in which the global justice movement reflects (and/or reacts to) the contextual emotional culture present in its environment. In particular, we shall suggest that a culture of toleration has developed, leading activists to value a relaxed atmosphere and facilitating mutual respect.

6.3 Group emotional cultures

Since social movements are mainly composed of networks of small groups, the group emotional culture is certainly important in social movement development. Research on emotions in small groups has stressed the importance of the group's affective composition and affective context in determining group cognition and behaviour (Kelly and Barsade 2001). Analysis has suggested that group emotions – like affect – are produced by bottom-up components (the affective compositional effects of individuals) and top-down components (the affective context; *ibid.*: 100). In general, social movements have been said to rely heavily on solidarity incentives. In fact, the role of affective ties has been acknowledged in the explanation of recruitment as well as the maintenance of commitments, especially but not only in high-risk forms of activism (McAdam 1988; della Porta 1995). However, researchers have also emphasized that strong internal friendships may discourage the recruitment of new members (Freeman 1974).

Crossgroup differences have been noted as well. Different groups and movements treat emotions differently. In constructing their public image, some stress reason over emotion, while others aim at producing 'moral shock'. In addition, the set of emotions considered as appropriate changes from one movement to another (for instance, from the labour movement to the women's movement) and from one organization to another. Some movements or movement organizations have been said to be more prone to showing (some) emotions: this is the case for parts of the women's movement and some of its spinoffs (see Whittier 2001) or parts of the animal rights movement of the past. Some groups tend to stimulate strong emotions of sympathy, in what has been defined as 'felt emotions'; some appreciate a gentle environment (Allahyari 2001); others consider emotions unprofessional, and detrimental to recruitment (McAllister Groves 2001). Specific movement cultures determine the emotional resonance of particular moral claims, as has been demonstrated by research on the anti-slavery movement (M. P. Young 2001). Specific religious visions also interact with information on particular events and network ties in determining moral outrage (and therefore intensified commitment), for example, among activists of the peace movement in Central America (Nepstad and Smith 2001).

Our research confirms the importance of developing positive emotions at the group level, while at the same time keeping negative emotions under control. It allows a focus on the norms and rituals associated with the development of friendship. However, it also allows us to identify differences and to (speculatively) link them to some group characteristics.

In general, our groups seem to demonstrate a relaxed atmosphere – although to varying degrees. Based on our rough indicator of the emotional charge involved in controversies, most discussions in our groups were characterized by a positive atmosphere and amicable relations. About half of the controversies unfolded in a relaxed way and about one-third in a mixed situation, while only 15% of the exchanges occurred in a tense atmosphere.

The global justice movement seems in general to put a particular emphasis on internal relations based on mutual respect. The creation of a 'good vibe' has been openly advocated in movement experiments with decision-making by consensus, which sometimes even assign a specialized role of 'vibe-watcher'. In fact, a common observation of the researchers who analysed the groups is the widespread presence of 'good emotion', in terms of a friendly environment. 'Perhaps because of the relatively small attendance at the meetings, the atmosphere is warm and friendly, and no particular tensions within the group seem to exist.' This observation on the Swiss Lemanic Social Forum (FSL) as characterized by a 'warm and

Table 6.1. *Degree of negative emotional tension during controversies by country (%)*

	France	Germany	Italy	Spain	Switzerland	UK
Relaxed	41	29	83	74	39	50
Mixed	41	33	8	23	42	50
Tense	18	38	8	3	19	0
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
N	34	21	12	31	31	14

Note: Cramer's $V = .313$ ($p = .002$).

friendly' mood would apply to many of the sessions observed. In the Berlin Attac Group Financial Markets as well, offensive speech hardly ever occurred. Instead, group sessions are characterized by 'humour and a friendly, harmonious atmosphere. Old and new members work together without frictions' (field notes).

There were, however, differences as well. First, discussions were tenser in some countries than in others (Table 6.1). There is a strong and statistically significant relationship between the degree of emotional tension and the country in which the group is based. The Italian and Spanish groups seem much more relaxed in their internal communication than those in the other countries (even though this does not mean that there are fewer controversies – see, e.g., Table 7.1 – as different opinions can be expressed with less fear of disrupting the life of the group). This applies in part also to the British groups. The German groups are characterized by a particularly tense atmosphere in this respect, followed by the Swiss and the French. However, these differences cannot be easily interpreted in terms of the institutional characteristics or the traditions of contention in the six countries. The only apparent pattern that can be discerned is the similarity between the two Southern European countries.

Overall, emotions are not discussed much in the groups, or addressed in the organizational documents. As noted for No Vox, even if the group is very much self-reflexive as far as its decision-making process or claims are concerned, when explicitly asked about emotions in the group, activists seem puzzled and confess a lack of attention to the issue. This also emerged when the researcher mentioned to the Conscious Consumers (CC) activists that she had not 'really spotted much use of emotions in getting messages across in the group' and a member of the group replied: 'Some people are more capable of others at it, aren't they? And, um, like you say, I can't think of any example of anybody using any emotion. Not recently, anyway.' An exception is Attac France, where negative emotions

were openly discussed after a very difficult internal conflict had disrupted organizational life. According to field notes: 'Emotion has been discussed in the group discussion and in interviews as far as anger is concerned, in reference to the crisis the board experienced during the couple of years prior to my observation. References were made in terms of a past that should not be reproduced.'

Second, group differences emerge. Generally speaking, apart from the British cases, the two groups studied in each country vary in terms of the degree of negative emotional tension during controversies (Table 6.2). Therefore, the differences across countries observed above are not representative of situations that are specific to the national context. The small number of cases discourages us from statistically testing whether differences across groups or across countries are more important. In the absence of this possibility, we can try to reach the same goal indirectly by focusing on the four Attac groups. Three of them (those based in France, Germany and Switzerland) present very similar behaviour with regard to the emotional charge present in controversies, with quite a balanced distribution of relaxed and tense discussions. Attac Florence, however, had much more relaxed exchanges than its counterparts in the other three countries. Thus, if on the one hand the similarity of three of the four Attac groups we have studied points to an explanation in terms of characteristics of the organization, on the other hand the deviant case of Italy forces us to be more nuanced in this respect. Apart from that, the Berlin Social Forum stands out as having the most negative atmosphere during controversies, while the discussions of Attac Florence and Córdoba Solidaria all unfolded in a relaxed way.

If harmonious relations and respect for others appear to be widespread norms in all of our groups, the high heterogeneity in terms of preferred tactics as well as specific identities seems to be reflected in various groups' emotional cultures. Although there are exceptions, the climate of meetings seems more relaxed in groups that are more based on friendship ties. In fact, according to the general descriptions of our groups (see della Porta and Rucht 2008), there seem to be paths between groups that present themselves as spaces for the development of positive emotions and those that, instead, privilege an instrumental vision of the group.

The difference between a group based on friendship ties and an instrumental one is evident in the British comparison. Friendship is clearly observed in the Conscious Consumers (CC), where the young members commit more time to the cause and know one another fairly well. In contrast, there is much less commitment and less social bonding in the local Thanet Friends of the Earth (TFoE) group, which in fact invests much less in getting to know one another socially.

Table 6.2. Degree of negative emotional tension during controversies by group (percentages)

	Germany:				Italy:				Spain:				Switzerland:		Switzerland:		UK:	
	Attac	Group	Financial	Berlin	Attac	Italy:	Water	Campaign	Córdoba	Ecologistas	Attac	Geneva	Lemanic	Forum	UK:	Conscious	UK:	
	France:	France:	France:	Germany:	Italy:	Italy:	Italy:	Italy:	Spain:	Spain:	Spain:	Spain:	Switzerland:	Switzerland:	Switzerland:	UK:	UK:	
	Attac	No Vox	Markets	Social	Florence	Florence	Water	Water	Córdoba	Ecologistas	Attac	Geneva	Lemanic	Forum	UK:	Conscious <td>UK:</td>	UK:	
	France	Attac	(Berlin)	Forum	Attac	Attac	Campaign	Campaign	Solidaria	en Acción	Attac	Geneva	Forum	Forum	UK:	Consumers <td>UK:</td>	UK:	
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Note: Cramer's V = .419 (p = .001).

Friendship ties seem to facilitate the expression of positive emotions, while negative emotions are more often mentioned in instrumental talks. Continuing with the British example, CC activists express anger and sadness after failing to win the motion to boycott Coca-Cola in the general student assembly, but also (and often) joy and happiness: 'I was over the moon that straight away I was given responsibility', declared the president-elect of the way the group made him feel involved, and the vice president noted that he was 'Really pleased. Really happy with the turnout, motivation, and the really nice people we've met.' In TFoE, the emotions mentioned are more of a negative type, as worries, apathy, depression and unhappiness are repeatedly mentioned by the activists ('PJ: 'Yeah, I mean the apathy side of the thing is depressing and it is really on a local and a national level, the turnout for elections, local and national . . . if you just continuously feel alone or virtually alone, like our little group meeting every month, that can be quite demoralizing if you're not careful.')

A similar emotional emphasis on friendship can derive from different causes – emotional labour being among them. Among the Conscious Consumers, friendship ties are strengthened by the homogeneity – social (all are students) and generational (all are young) – of the group. According to the field notes,

In the Conscious Consumers Society, most group members know one another well. The core members were anthropology students, who travelled to Spain for the third year of their four-year degree and are very close friends. Other students seem to mostly be studying environmental social science or politics. There was a lot of group solidarity – the core members often socialized together on Wednesday evenings, and there have been end-of-term get-togethers and parties. The group has an egalitarian and open culture . . . In meetings, participants frequently use the pronoun 'we' – 'we should do this . . . ' etc. reflecting shared principles. The group is very friendly, and offensive words are rarely spoken, if at all.

A friendly, egalitarian atmosphere, however, does not naturally emerge from frequent interactions, but is also cultivated through informal rituals. In No Vox, the emphasis on a friendly atmosphere develops within an informal, horizontal culture, characterized by the absence of a proactive chair in most of the meetings as well as a lack of a real organization of the order of the speeches; but this seems not to raise frustration as opposed to a more formalized way of facilitating meetings. In Attac Group Financial Markets (Berlin): 'after a session is finished the whole group goes to a pub for a drink'. And in the Lemanic Social Forum, every session is preceded by about 10–15 minutes of informal chat among participants ('Hey, how are you doin?'; 'Mmmm . . . a lot to do for my exams . . .'; 'Yeah, well, we all went through that!'; 'By the way, yesterday I went to the cinema and

I saw the movie you recommended . . . you know, the one that won last year's Berlin Festival'); usually one or two of the participants bring something to eat during the meeting (e.g. chocolate, crisps); and a final beer is always shared among the participants after the meeting, in the centre's bar or in a nearby one.

Friendship ties are cultivated inside, but also outside the political meetings. In the Lemanic Social Forum, 'Participants apparently spend some time together outside the organization, which increases the friendly and relaxed atmosphere.' This is true also of both the Berlin groups, as 'All Attac Group Financial Markets members know each other well. Some group members have quite close relations. They work together on political issues beyond the group'; and 'The core group of the Berlin Social Forum consists of six to eight highly educated activists, some of them with an academic career up to the postdoctoral level, and one of them being professor of political science. Most of these activists have known each other for a long time. Some are friends who also meet outside the forum.' Conscious Consumers met every Wednesday afternoon, and meetings were followed by social activities such as a trip to a pub or to a venue with live music.

An emphasis on an egalitarian culture also emerges in the French group No Vox, where informality and friendship seem to require more emotional labour. In the description presented in the French report, the setting and the communicative style seem to take a most important role:

No Vox meets every month or every month and a half, except during summer. The fourteen meetings observed took place in three different places . . . All these places are very busy ones. As the doors of the meeting rooms are never shut (when there are doors!), the atmosphere is quite noisy. People come in the room to greet friends, etc. . . . meetings are interrupted by people looking for information, help, etc. The room is not separated from offices or common spaces.

People sit randomly, stand up very often, sit down again, etc. Meetings are conducted in a very informal way. They always start late, from 30 minutes to almost an hour. People use this time to exchange information, discuss different projects, etc. Even when the room is supposed to be a non-smoking one, people just move a little backwards and smoke a cigarette, while participating in the discussion. Very often, there is food or drink available. Whenever new members join, the meetings start with a presentation, so that everybody knows who participates and which organizations are represented.

Similarly, in the Berlin Social Forum,

What could be regarded as a ritual is the standard sequence of the meetings. There was a phase of informal talk in the beginning, an introductory round as the first group activity (even though participants were more or less the same in every meeting) and a joint drink after the meeting . . . the handling of emotions had a

ritual-like character, too: they were moderated with reference to general rules during the meetings.

Storytelling, defined as emotionally charged accounts (Polletta 2009), plays a particular important role in creating bonds of solidarity. In No Vox, the participant observation of several sessions indicates the role of storytelling about the group itself in building solidarity: 'The friendly atmosphere is also maintained during the discussion, through the evocation of common struggles and experiences.' Narratives used in the meetings in order to build the collective identity of the group focus on the definition of the actors as the 'have-nots', rather than the 'excluded' ('if you call us "excluded" ... wait, what is that? It's a denial ... And I refuse that, we refuse that'), and the strategic choice to participate in social forums: 'one step inside, one step outside, that is recognizing the importance of social forums but the necessity to change them and to struggle within them for this'.

Similarly in the Berlin Social Forum, 'As the group was heterogeneous in terms of education, storytelling was a way to complement analytical turns. The evaluation of a demonstration, for instance, included both individual stories and attempts to understand the protest in the context of a mobilization cycle.' In Attac Group Financial Markets Berlin, as well, storytelling is frequently used, both in the form of personal experiences of participation in protest and of the collective history of the social movements: while the former helps in building trust and understanding between individual activists, the latter is used to locate specific decisions in a long process of collective learning and in a broad collective memory.

Storytelling emerges, additionally, as a way to deal with controversies by reconstituting the identity of the group. In Attac Florence, when the group started to reflect on the perceived crisis of the organization at the national and local levels, according to the fieldworker, 'I could observe in the group a sense of frustration with the situation and a lack of optimism for the future. The discussion was, however, calm and relaxed and members respected each other's opinions, even when they were divergent.' In this case, the contrast of opinion between Ilaria, attributing the crisis to the top-down style of the national leaders, and Christian, instead locating members' disengagement in broader processes, leads the participants to the meeting to retell the story of Attac. According to the field notes:

Caterina: *Formally, before there was an Attac Italy, in Genoa the Attac flags were those of Attac France, but in Italy there was already an informal network which explicitly referred to Attac.*

One of the members stated that he was in France at that time, and he was a member of Attac France.

Ilaria remembers: *'During the first national assembly in 2002 in Bologna, there was a mass participation event and many activists of the GJM were present, including some national spokespersons such as Agnoletto'*. She continues by reporting that the first statute of the association gave the founding members control of the association, they basically had the last word, as in France, but then it changed. This was because at the beginning the Italian Attac was worrying about activities of hijacking by external groups that could enter the association with many members and decide everything.

In Florence, Caterina remembers, the first assembly was in 2002 in the Casa del Popolo Andrea del Sarto, and in practice it attracted most of the people who were active in the GJM in Genoa and after: *'Then, when it was decided to build the local social forum, our function was reduced and only 10–12 people remained in the association. Before that, there were people from social centres, leftist activists and Catholic organizations such as Lilliput, but once the social forum was set up Attac became only one group of the network.'*

Caterina also remembers that the first campaign was the Tobin tax campaign in which all the network of the social forum actively participated (supporting a tax on financial transactions). It was at that point that it was decided to organize a public assembly in Florence to discuss Attac and the Tobin tax, and the huge participation in a big theatre of Florence (the Puccini) was reported. Here there was a problem: Caterina reports that one of the most visible members of Attac publicly accused and even offended some networks of the movement considered too moderate; he is reported to have said 'we are not Girotondini [a movement which emerged in Italy against Berlusconi government attack on the judiciary power and against his control of television], the Ethical Bank or Critic consumerist organizations, they are not useful at all!' Many people complained in the assembly and six members of Attac left the organization.

Protest actions are preferred over other activities exactly because they are felt to be more emotionally satisfying ('having something to do makes it fun'). According to field notes,

in Attac Berlin there was a discussion of whether to do protest activities or political education. Besides more goal-rational reasoning (which activity is more 'effective'), in the end what was more important was the question of whether participants are motivated to do either one or the other. This resulted in a situation where political education was considered relevant, from goal-rational concerns, but actually never done, since only a few were actually motivated to do it. In the end, the group did protest activities, although their effect (media resonance etc.) might [prove to] be very limited.

The emphasis on positive emotions does not imply that meetings are always relaxed. The most extreme cases of negative emotions within the group, in terms of aggression, were reported for Attac France. Here, the group emotional culture still seems traumatized by those events, which in storytelling are addressed in a very metaphoric way ('the crisis of last year', 'what we have been through', etc.). Tensions, however, remain visible and explode now and then over important decisions, even among members of the same faction, as emerges from the following extract from field notes:

The board deals with the 'Chemin de la Découverte', which was organized by a few local groups this summer. They engage in a strong critique of this initiative: only 142 participants for a budget of more than 100,000 euros. Moreover, board members who attended this initiative explain that some of the conferences and workshops were of poor quality, [and] that others didn't have a place within Attac (personal development workshops, etc.). As this meeting was initiated by local groups that are supposed to be close to [Attac leader] Jacques Nikonoff, balancing it is complicated by other preoccupations. Board members have been accused in the former board meeting of criticizing the Chemins de la Découverte for political reasons and of being unfair to the organizers. One of them is attending the meeting.

He makes an introduction, presenting how he values the initiative, but stating that the organizers have yet not engaged into a collective valuation.

It is discussed whether it should be conducted again as an event next year or included within the next summer university.

Lionel: Mixing both initiatives would be the worst thing to do. We would only highlight the weaknesses of both. But we should change the way the summer university is done. In terms of methods, it's an educational aberration. It's worse than a course at university.

... [Discussion goes on, nobody addresses Lionel's intervention.]

Jacques (angry): it is completely false to say that the summer university is 'in terms of methods an educational aberration' [people start laughing – Jacques is known for his jokes]. Participants always express their satisfaction with the summer university. Jean-Louis spoke about the questionnaires that we always circulate, and they show this satisfaction.

Lionel (quite loudly): Jacques, you cannot use such questionnaires to justify how it's organized. Of course people say they are satisfied, if they are not they ... [He is interrupted by Marc.]

Marc: Lionel, it's not your turn. I have a list; you have to respect the list.

Lionel (very angry): Yes, Ok, don't speak to me like that; I'm not a moron, I can understand. It's Ok, go ahead.

... [Nobody reacts on this issue.]

Again it's Lionel's turn to speak. He denies the value of the questionnaires, being rather sarcastic towards Jacques. Then: educational methods, it's what I have done for years, so I'm quite good at that; I know what I'm talking about, you know. And there are studies that have shown that if you don't use several of your five senses, then you don't take it much of what you're supposed to learn [many talk while Lionel is speaking, he speaks more and more loudly].

A working group is set up. Lionel doesn't want to be part of it – even if some explicitly ask him to.

Similarly, when Bernard Cassen – founder, first chairman and honorary chairman of Attac – attends the board's meeting on 21 July, a controversy on its right to speak escalates in angry tones.

6.4 **Situational emotional cultures**

What is considered appropriate (expression of) emotions differs in different social movement activities: in interaction with the public versus internal interactions, but also in small-group events versus mass events. Participation in (transformative) protest events (including meetings) produces emotional in-process benefits – a pride-in-agency that gives pleasure through self-respect (Wood 2001). In high-risk activism, rituals as well as intimate social networks help to manage fear through the development of collective effervescence during meetings (Goodwin and Pfaff 2001). Also, in dealing with the public, social movement organizations might resort to forms of action that challenge onlookers, producing shock and even angry reactions (as with the Women in Black in Israel; see Benski 2005), or amusement and shame (as in cultural jamming; see Wettergren 2005). In contrast, in the internal life of social movement organizations, solidarity is built through sentiments such as love and empathy, often encouraged in a relaxed, friendly atmosphere (on laughter as a ritual to build community by diffusing tensions, see Summers-Effler 2005). In fact, 'much of the time the emotions most relevant to social movements are those associated with internal group dynamics' (*ibid.*: 137). Face-to-face encounters with comrades produce emotional energy (confidence, enthusiasm, solidarity) (Collins 1990).

In what follows, we shall focus on a specific situation – the internal meeting – but also look at the ways in which characteristics of the meetings interact with the emotional atmosphere. In particular, without being able to assess causal relations, we are interested in observing how the emotional atmosphere of a (part of a) meeting interacts with the decision-making modes and outcomes.

Our quantitative data allow us to examine the relations between the general atmosphere in group discussions and some features of controversies. Here we focus on three such features: the type of power, the mode of decision and the outcome of the controversy. Given our exploratory aim, we do not advance hypotheses as to causality, but look mainly at the existence of a correlation between the degree of negative emotional tension during controversies and these characteristics.

Table 6.3. *Degree of negative emotional tension and type of power (%)*

<i>Type of power</i>	<i>Emotional tension</i>		
	Relaxed	Mixed	Tense
Hard power clearly prevailing	0%	8%	5%
Rather hard power	12%	35%	46%
Rather soft power	23%	25%	32%
Soft power clearly prevailing	65%	31%	18%
Total	100%	100%	100%
N	69	48	22

Note: Cramer's $V = .318$ ($p = .000$).

For type of power, we distinguish between soft power and hard power, where the former is a communicative power based on words and symbols, and the latter a non-communicative power ultimately based on material, physical or similar kinds of sanctions (e.g. expressing a veto, threat of exit, rule of majority). Here we use a variable measuring the degree to which hard power was present in the controversy (see Chapter 2). There is a significant relationship between the degree of emotional tension and the type of power (Table 6.3). As one might expect, soft power prevails in relaxed discussions, while hard power is more likely on those (rarer) occasions when the atmosphere becomes tense. This difference becomes even more explicit if we collapse the four categories of the type of power variable into a variable with only two values, as soft power was present in nearly 90 per cent of the relaxed controversies, while both types of power are more or less equally distributed among mixed and tense discussions.

If we look at the mode of decision (that is, how a decision was made), we have another indication that the degree of emotional tension is associated with certain features of controversies, although the relationship is weaker and only significant at the 10% level (Table 6.4). To be sure, most of the decisions were taken by nodding or tacit agreement, regardless of the emotional charge of the discussion. However, unanimous decisions are much more frequent in relaxed controversies, while decisions taken by straw poll or majority vote are predominant in mixed and, above all, in tense situations. Consensual decision-making (as indicated by decisions taken by unanimity) seems to be favoured by a discourse situation characterized by a low degree of negative emotional tension. Here the direction of causality can be determined, insofar as the decision is taken at the end of a discussion and therefore of a controversy. It is therefore more

Table 6.4. *Degree of negative emotional tension and mode of decision (%)*

<i>Mode of decision</i>	<i>Emotional tension</i>		
	Relaxed	Mixed	Tense
Straw poll	4%	4%	11%
Nodding / tacit agreement	66%	73%	67%
Majority vote	4%	15%	22%
Unanimity	26%	8%	0%
Total	100%	100%	100%
N	53	26	9

Note: Cramer's $V = .247$ ($p = .096$). Not applicable cases and other modes of decisions have been excluded.

likely that the emotional charge influences the mode of decision rather than the other way around.

A similar reasoning applies to the relationship between the degree of negative emotional tension and the outcome of controversies (Table 6.5). To grasp this dimension, which also occurs at the end of a controversy, we have a variable distinguishing various possible outcomes, including taking no decision at all.⁶ The statistically significant relationship is strongest among those examined in our analysis and points in the same direction as previously observed. Consensus is more likely when the discussion has been relaxed, thus lacking negative emotional tension. This can be seen by looking at the figures corresponding to the category of 'rather consensus' and then collapsing the three categories that can be assimilated into a sort of 'agreement-finding' outcome (rather compromise, allowed consensus and rather consensus). In contrast, controversies ended by decree were more frequent after tense exchanges. Furthermore, emotionally charged controversies more often led the group to take no decision, another sign that negative emotions in deliberation constitute an obstacle to decision-making. If we exclude from the analysis the cases in which no decision was taken, the relationship becomes even stronger (Cramer's $V = .444$, $p = .000$).

The three variables considered so far refer to the ways in which controversies unfolded. To conclude this exploratory analysis, we would

⁶ The fundamental difference between the outcome of a controversy and the mode of decision is that the former describes how the group resolved the controversial problem, whereas the latter simply classifies the process of decision-making.

Table 6.5. *Degree of negative emotional tension and outcome of controversy (%)*

Outcome of controversy	Emotional tension		
	Relaxed	Mixed	Tense
No decision was taken	24%	36%	60%
Postponing	11%	9%	0%
Delegation of decision	4%	2%	0%
Rather decree	0%	9%	20%
Rather acclamation	4%	0%	5%
Rather compromise	21%	21%	10%
Allowed consensus	4%	13%	5%
Rather consensus	32%	11%	0%
Total	100%	100%	100%
N	72	47	20

Note: Cramer's $V = .374$ ($p = .000$).

Table 6.6. *Degree of negative emotional tension and number of participants (means)*

	Emotional tension		
	Relaxed	Mixed	Tense
Maximum number of people in session	14.3	15.9	18.8
Maximum number of women in session	5.1	4.9	5.9
Number of people present during controversy	12.3	14.9	17.2
Number of people actively participating in controversy	5.8	8.1	8.0
Number of women actively participating in controversy	2.2	2.7	2.6
N	72	49	22

like to investigate the potential impact of more 'structural' aspects. Unfortunately, the only indicators on this dimension included in our quantitative data are those concerning the number of people participating in the session or in the controversy (Table 6.6). In general, relaxed discussions are characterized by a lower number of participants both in the session and during the controversy, except perhaps for the number of women attending the session. In this case, as in the case of the number of women actively participating in the controversy, there seems to be no relationship with the degree of negative emotional tension. We cannot say if this is due to the absence of women's specific way of addressing the discussion, or to the low proportion of women participating in the

meetings and, especially, in the controversies – reducing the potential for the development of a gender-specific style and instead facilitating conformity. Concerning the number of people attending the session, present during the controversy, and actively participating in the controversy, however, the smaller the number, the more relaxed the exchange. Yet, an ANOVA test shows that only the latter variable is significantly correlated with the degree of negative emotional tension ($p = .016$); all other tests were not significant.

Qualitative results of our research allow us to better understand the social mechanisms that intervene between causes and effects, focusing particular attention on the role of relaxed, friendly emotions in organizational decision-making. There are different opinions in the social science literature about the role of friendship in influencing the expression of conflicts. On the one hand, friendships could induce participants to avoid the expression of diverging opinions, in order to avoid straining an emotionally valued relationship. This is why the presence of peer groups is usually assumed to increase conformity. On the other hand, however, friendship could help in absorbing without trauma diverging opinions that could appear as threatening in more ‘instrumentally defined’ situations.

In our observation, in general, the emphasis on a friendly atmosphere allows the group to address private issues without tensions. As explicitly noted for Attac Group Financial Markets (Berlin), ‘In this relaxed atmosphere, it is possible to bring up private problems and frame them in political terms.’ Friendship ties in fact allow for an easier diffusion of conflicts. Joking and laughter are effective ways to agree on a solution (often avoiding a formal decision). In No Vox, a very friendly atmosphere is expressed in frequent laughter. According to field notes, ‘Laughter occurs quite often, not only because people are kidding, but also as a way to state non-verbally the common approach or experience the group has, even when there are some nuances in the appreciation of a situation.’

Joking is also a way out of potential tensions. In No Vox, this emerges, for instance, during a discussion about the possibility that another group has hijacked a protest action, causing several members to not want to join. According to field notes:

There is an ongoing debate about an evening that is planned for the next day in solidarity with two hundred people who occupy a street and sleep there. A. fears that another group of homeless people may use this opportunity to join and thinks it would create problems because this group consists of people with serious addiction problems. S. thinks that there is no risk: the leaders of this group have lost their legitimacy and credibility; no one would follow them anymore. They discuss quite strongly. And end up like this:

S.: *They won't come, believe me. Shall we bet? [She raises her hand towards A. to make their bet official.]*

A.: *Better come and spend a night with us [sleeping outside], you'll see [both start laughing].*

Attac Group Financial Markets (Berlin) also:

operates very much with loud laughter, fun, not so much with anger about the ills of the world. What is a typical motion of emotion is the transformation of anger/frustration to jokes, and then action. Once it was noted that corporations and rich people do not pay much tax (tax evasion). This frustrating diagnosis was transformed into something like black humour, sarcastic commentary, which then motivated [the group] to think about campaign measures. This is a typical Attac style, in general in Germany. What results is for example a street theater where rich bosses are ridiculed for stealing tax money.

A relaxed atmosphere, often strengthened by friendship ties, allows for more open discussion. Friendship tends to diffuse conflicts, allowing for their expression but protecting the group from the potential negative effects. In the French group No Vox, 'Whenever strong disagreements could occur, conflict is avoided: either discussion is spontaneously closed or the network recalls that it does not intend to interfere with its members' lives.' In England, 'Conscious Consumer participants are willing and able to have open debates, they freely express their views and they can easily identify when a vote should be taken to resolve difficult issues' (see also reports on Italy, Switzerland and Spain). Conversely, the members of the other English group 'tend to remain quiet when they disagree with something so as to not upset other participants with whom they are only just beginning to form friendly relations. The infrequent meetings and lack of social activities are partly to blame for the lack of cohesion between TFoE participants.' When asked why the group seemed to make so little progress at making concretely binding decisions, a representative of TFoE attributed it to the perceived weak cohesion of the group: 'Well, because people, the general impression I get, which is probably very similar in most groups is that people don't want to commit themselves or upset other people by voicing their opinions strongly and so things tend to not be acted on, don't they?' The internal debate seems in fact hampered by a lack of strong ties as, in the words of an activist, 'I don't like to hurt people's feelings by criticizing what's going on.'

In interviews with members of TFoE, they recognize that the tendency in the group to shy away from emotions discourages discussions, but also reduces commitment:

That's the problem. People seem to be happier just talking about recycling, and the less emotional the better in a way. That seems to be what the mood is. I mean, um. Well, I don't know.

I mean, I was very passionate about the Westwood thing [a campaign against a housing development] and the Westwood issue. In the end I thought, 'Well, I can make a huge fuss about this', but I thought I could tell from the way that the meeting was going that essentially the chair, the facilitator in consultation with national Friends of the Earth had said 'Oh, that's an unwinnable campaign; apart from some rather marginal things, we can't do anything about it.' So I thought, 'I can make a huge fuss about this, or I can just see how things go.' Maybe, very, very wrongly I just let things go because I didn't want to bust up the group. But I didn't get a sense that there were a lot of people there who would go with me if I did make a big fuss. I think that most people aren't that really sort of interested, really.

Low emotional tone can also discourage some forms of contention considered 'too passionate'. As an activist of TFoE recalls,

One of the frustrations has been that, you know, uh, there has been a suggestion to take an action, like going and standing outside of the incinerator, you know, we thought, because we're media people on a very low level, and we thought, 'Gosh, that's a good picture opportunity, that's a good opportunity to send out a press release', and things like that, but immediately we are being told 'Argh, tone it down, urgh, you don't want publicity.' So instead of pre-publicizing it and having loads of people turning up with banners and things, it's been a kind of low key thing.

A similar argument is presented in the Swiss report which, comparing Attac Geneva with the Lemanic Social Forum, states that, 'The more heterogeneous the group, the higher the probability that numerous and/or severe controversies will rise among its members. Conversely, the more the group shares a common history and strong friendship bonds, the less we can expect conflicts to emerge ... This is especially true for ideologically driven groups such as the ones studied here.' In Attac Geneva, characterized by friendship among participants and ideological homogeneity, there are a good number of controversies, even though these are characterized by a high degree of reciprocity (defined as the degree to which other positions are referred to during the controversy). In this group:

- 'activists showed quite a high degree of rhetorical inclusion of the opposite arguments, which can be explained by the shared history and the friendship bonds of the group';
- 'Decisions are taken in a very relaxed way, which is typical of Attac Geneva meetings in general; since the meetings have a small attendance and participants are all friends, no structured decision mode seems necessary'; and
- 'Finally, conflicts in the Attac Geneva meetings were resolved almost always without any source, voluntary or not, of hard power (results not shown). Although sometimes the age of the speaker or the leadership skills acted as some sort of empowerment, the controversies were

almost always resolved through the power of the better argument and sometimes by a shared feeling of empathy. Again, the fact that participants seemed to share a common history and friendship bonds surely helps in this regard.'

While valuing a relaxed atmosphere, some of our groups were wary of the risk that the reliance on strong friendship ties could bring about in terms of closing down the groups, but also reproducing in the life of the social movement organization the personal tensions typical of small groups. Shying away from emotion, the group can also present a more efficient, instrumental image. The trade-off is, however, the difficulty in developing fluid communication, as noted, for instance, in the field notes on the Spanish *Ecologistas en Acción*:

Friendship does not seem to play a particular role in supporting the cohesion of *Ecologistas en Acción* nowadays, as it was for previous organizations (at least according to the two activists interviewed, who had participated in the process of unification). This situation is perceived as good (fewer personal quarrels), but it is not quite helpful in promoting a more fluid emotional communication or a greater adherence to the local group. In part, [this is] because most newcomers are members of other social networks that are also part of their identity as 'activists'.

In the group interview with members of the British CC, the general risk of becoming too closed ('cliquey') given the strong affective ties is acknowledged in theory, but not in its everyday reality where, to the contrary, the friendly atmosphere is presented as facilitating inclusive communication:

CS: OK. The fact that we're a small group could lead us to developing quite good friendship bonds and becoming emotionally involved at a friendship level. Do you see that as a good thing, or a bad thing? I mean it can be a bad thing if we're all really tightly knit and a newcomer comes in and finds it hard to fit in. I mean, it's like when you join a close group of friends and they've got their own set of jokes ...

PJ: No, you don't want to become clichéd, do you? I mean cliquey about it, do you? Because I was aware of that with Jade, thinking she's sitting there thinking 'bloody hell', and I suppose that does refer to when you were doing your summary because I thought 'God'. I wanted to say to her, 'Look, if you don't want to stay, please don't.' But I didn't want to make her feel like she should go, either.

WJ: I think we included her a lot, didn't we? I mean, We asked her ... we did include her.

CS: I mean, I made that suggestion in my notes: 'Don't suggest an action unless you're prepared to do it', and she said 'That's a silly comment, because that will stifle ideas', and it's true. She was actually actively engaging with the presentation.

WJ: Yeah.

PJ: That's true, yeah.

- WJ: Going to a meeting for the first time and feeling able to say something like that, that's good, isn't it?
- PJ: Yeah, and hopefully she'll not just dump it and say to herself 'I'll find another group' ...
- CS: So you don't think, apart from my presentation which might have made us appear a bit cliquey, we're not?
- PJ: No, because the group is small and it's sort of been through change, you know, it's been through a year of setting up and then been through some change recently as well, it's quite far from that at the moment. It could do with probably a bit more cohesion at the moment.
- CS: That's a good idea. I think going to the pub is a good idea, although I just always want to go home and go to sleep!

Another central (and related) issue is the extent to which emotional attitudes facilitate or obstruct deliberation. In the normative debate on deliberation, the Habermasian position has clearly stressed the role of 'rational' arguments (or, better, of reasonable arguments, or just reasons). Some critical comments, especially by feminist theorists, have instead stressed the positive role emotions can play. In our observation, more stress on the deliberation phase has been noted for those groups that recognize the role that a friendly atmosphere and mutual respect play for the internal communication in the group. For instance, the French report addresses the different visions of democracy in the two groups observed:

No Vox puts the stress on the deliberation phase – i.e. on the process itself – whereas Attac includes the decision – i.e. the result – in its organizational conception of democracy. As other reports have shown, implicit decisions require strong ties among the group's members: they can occur when members know each other very well. It is thus probably a feature for rather small groups, those that are not composed by elected (hence rotating) representatives. A small group of friends opens possibilities for very symmetrical discussions and a horizontal way of working that could be considered as being the ideal-type for democracy.

Also in the Lemanic Social Forum, the quality of communication is considered particularly important. So,

the meeting goes forward from one point to the next with a general acceptance of a consensual solution/decision. It is thus fundamental to underline the commitment of the members to mutual respect, dialogue and discussion in order to reach a consensual decision mode. The points that are discussed are never limited neither in time nor in extent and everybody is invited to give their opinions about the issue raised.

Not a friendly and relaxed atmosphere, but informality emerges as potentially obstructing deliberation. On this topic, the Swiss report stresses that, while the lack of formalized decision-making procedures is effective when concerning minor points, on more important issues 'it creates a large

amount of misinterpretation and incomprehension, and paves the way to quite a complicated attribution of each member's responsibilities'. For instance, in a controversy related to task division,

although some sort of minimal decision was taken in the first meeting we attended (i.e. that the person in charge should do his/her duties) after a discussion that lasted 11 minutes, the same discussion came up in the next meeting, in which a totally different decision was taken (another person in charge, sharing of responsibilities). No new elements were introduced in the discussion between the two meetings (e.g. such as an external criticism or another mistake of the person in charge), but the decision taken in the first meeting was apparently not satisfying and the same discussion came up again (twice, in the same meeting).

6.5 Conclusion

This chapter has explored the role of emotions in the internal life of global justice movement groups. Our point of departure was recent research that has shed new light on the study of emotions in social movements. Following this literature, our own approach has bridged, in multiple ways, emotion and cognition – not least through the impact that a relaxed atmosphere has on communication. We have worked under the assumption that emotions are influenced by the general external context, the specific group culture, and the more specific situation in which movement activists find themselves. We have focused in particular on the latter two aspects.

The combined use of the quantitative and qualitative materials stemming from our participant observation allowed us to show that emotions play an important role in the day-to-day practices of the groups we have studied. Most accounts in our participant observation stressed the 'good atmosphere' within the groups, with dominant reciprocal emotions such as friendship/love – although some frustration also emerged. Some pioneering research on social movements has looked at the mobilizing capacity of 'good' emotions (such as hope or indignation), and the movements' work on potentially dangerous emotions (such as fear or shame) (Eyerman 2005; Flam 2005). With reference to previous categorizations of emotions, our results point to the importance of positive and reciprocal types of emotions for the internal life of the organization. While outwardly oriented activities such as protest often stress the mobilizing effects of negative emotions – such as anger or indignation – maintaining commitment still requires the development of a pleasurable atmosphere in inwardly oriented activities.

Although it should be read with caution because of the limited number of cases, our analysis shows that emotions play an important role in the

handling of controversies by social movement activists. There are, however, also relevant internal differences in the group emotional cultures as well as in the situational emotional culture. First, we have shown that the atmosphere and the emotional charge that characterize controversies vary across groups. In particular, we noted a prevalence of relaxed meetings in groups that value friendship ties and actively work to produce them through various rituals, including storytelling. The role of dramaturgy, narrative and rituals in intensifying commitment has been investigated for protest events in general (as an effect of 'emotional liberation'; see Flam 2005) as well as for specific critical emotional events. In authoritarian regimes as well as democracies, public rituals are staged in order to produce communities of feeling (Berezin 2001). Our research points to a link – to be further investigated in more systematic research – between the investment in emotional labour oriented towards the development of friendly, horizontal ties and the prevalence of a relaxed atmosphere in the group meetings.

Our results also link situational emotional culture with the communication in meetings. In particular, emotions have been found to be associated with certain features of controversies such as the type of power, the mode of decision and the outcome. In particular, a more relaxed atmosphere tends to interact with a softer and more consensual type of internal communication. Finally, we found little impact of more 'structural' aspects such as the number of people attending the session or participating in the controversies, except for the number of people actively participating in a controversy. A high number of active participants seems in fact to increase the likelihood of emotional tension.

There is also a third level we considered important, even though we had little empirical material to address it: the contextual emotional culture. Without making any definite statements, we can draw from our research some reflections for further research on this aspect. First, looking at national emotional cultures, as filtered through social movement tradition, we have observed crossnational variations, which may be linked to differences in the institutional contexts or in the traditions of contention. Second, looking at the emotional culture of the broader social movement/s to which our groups belong, we can suggest that the emphasis on friendship and a relaxed atmosphere is linked to a normative definition of the movement as pluralistic and tolerant (della Porta 2005, 2009). However, norms are also constructed in action, with participation in meetings and protest events producing intense friendship ties, as well as more general collective identification. Group practices – from social activities to storytelling – increase both.

Previous research warned about the potential shortcomings of friendship ties for collective action. Groups of friends could appear to be too close to potential recruits, and therefore act in an exclusive way towards them (Freeman 1974; Polletta 2002). Trade-offs have also been often mentioned: some groups are better at producing emotions, but they can also appear as closed to sympathizers, who do not know how to enter and participate (Roth 2005: 202). In this regard, our research pointed to the presence of emotional labour, which helps in the development of friendship ties, but also attributes to them specific meaning, bridging them with an inclusive vision.

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